

• LYRICS • AND • LANDSCAPES

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LYRICS AND
LANDSCAPES

Books by
Harrison S. Morris



A DUET IN LYRICS—
WITH JOHN ARTHUR HENRY.

MADONNA AND OTHER POEMS.

TALES FROM SHAKESPEARE.

TALES FROM TEN POETS.

IN THE YULE-LOG GLOW.

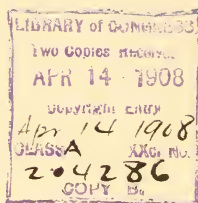
LYRICS AND LANDSCAPES

BY
HARRISON S. MORRIS



NEW YORK
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TO
ANNA

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❁ LYRICS AND LANDSCAPES ❁

NIGHT

I

Cool dome of leaves, close in—
Make earlier night below the woven boughs;

Bring stealthy footsteps, to my woodland house
Of dancers dark and thin.

For out where yet the white light of the West
Sends streamers backward o'er the narrowed world,

Night lies unmanifest,

In sable ambush curled,

Eager for one lone star, then out to leap and tread

Dusk frolic on the dewy green,

With balanced body and with frantic head.

II

I know thee, Night; thy minions, beetle-black,

Who has not met upon a pacing way

When dusk dips into day?

Soft shades that vanish at a reachèd touch,

That leap the rails and leap the rills,

With endless bicker up the hills,

Yet sink to air within a timid clutch.

Now, only here about my woodland house,

Where light begins to lack

For closeness of the intergrowing boughs,

Here only do they pack,

Leashed by the hand that hardly holds them back.

III

What whispers, what alarums, what debate;

What 'tempted tiptoe on the margin green!

Mark how they flutter to the folded gate
 That lies the wood between
And that low region where the sun is late.
Mark how they bend, as when the breeze
 Walks in the barley to his knees;
 And lo! who nimbly springs,
 With widened sable wings,
Out to the sod, and leads the way
With many a frolic fit of play
Down all the valleys to the heels of day.

IV

And lo! thy music, blown on quiet reeds
 Amid the little rivers, where thy feet
 Wade first, when Even leads,
 With shaded torch, thy legionaries fleet.
Hearken unto the rhythmic beat,

Down by the pebbles in some sedgy seat,
Of atomies that blow—
With fingers playing swift and sweet—
The lyrics of the vanished after-glow,
The music that no mortal may repeat,
Of grasses as they grow,
And moon-buds, and the swelling wheat,
And scent turned into sound by witcheries they
know!

V

Lean, with thy darkened coronet of stars
Where hang the greatening fruits
In summer's languid breeze,
And, thro' the black-enwoven orchard trees,
Listen! Vibrations, whimpers, sorceries;

The muffled roll of elfin cars
Across enchanted turf; the glees
Of wood-imps at their mimicries,
And voices of old Dorian deities
In many-cadenced keys!

VI

These are thy drowsy vespers, flung
From shadowy viols and visionary flutes
That to the touch of musing mutes,
Give forth the fragrant sorceries
Of apple-bending shoots,
And winey clusters in the mid-bough hung.
These are thy fingerers of unseen salutes
Who touch illusive lutes—

Seated olden oaks among,
And in the beechen roots—
Like marble players on a carven frieze
With marble songs unsung.

VII

And from the clay-cool caverns; hark—below!
The Earth is drunken with the summer night.
The pulses of winged dwellers come and go
That have not any might
Save music; and no other being know;—
The frog, the beetle, and the buzzing mite;
The cricket with his tiny tremolo;
Twitter of dreaming birds that wait the glow
Of dewy morning in her meadows white.
Then —down the peopled mystery, a pause,—

And now, an owlet with the cry of Cain,
In notes of dripping pain,
An agony in vain—
And all the wood in sweetest tune again.

VIII

Then, here below leaf-thicknesses to be,
O Night, alone with thee;
To ponder on thy olden birth
That was before the curve of verdurous Earth
Rose, moon-like, through the azure mystery;
O Night, to hear thy venerable speech
Sweep like a sea upon a sandy girth—
Makes quiet in the troubled heart of man,
Where Day, too long a span,
Lingers with weary aim to banish thee
And that old human right of blest tranquillity.

TO A FLAG FLOWER IN AN ALMANAC

I PLUCKED you from your quiet glow
Of purple glory in the green,
And I forgot you loved the low,
Sweet moisture where the dock leaves lean.

Forgot it was your home, that you
Were born to bring a beauty there,
That Dawn would miss you, and the dew,
And Night, and every wandering air.

Forgot your priestly rite to hold
A censured offering to the sun

Lyrics and Landscapes

Who, bending, burns the marsh to gold

Because of service you have done.

I plucked you, killed you, laid you here

Between the pages stained with trade

Nor heeded, with the fading year,

Your tender ashes fail and fade.

Yet, when on some mute night of snow

The pages open where you 've lain,

The marsh will level wide, I know,

And spring and you be young again.

A SEA LITANY

I

THOU unto whose forgetful deeps are poured
Tears that have trembled at the eye of mirth
And laughter that a little while is lord,
Life-giver, many-shored,
Who frolic with the tolerated earth
And toss, or take back from her a heavy hoard;
Thou unto whom Love is a waftage spent
And Beauty but the foam upon thy face,
Grant thou my cry a grace,
Make answer with thy many noises blent
Into one briny word!

II

Unto mine ignorance speak, O august Sea,
Keeper of mysteries that lie writ in foam—

A runic mockery

Of wisdom, that may read the symbolled dome

But pierces not to thee!

Behold, I kneel in fealty at thy marge,

Vouchsafe, in accents as thy limits, large,

Yet tempered to my timid sense,

Some simple, saving evidence

Of human heritage in immortality.

III

For clouding up, as incense unto vaults

Hoary with worship, floats the faith of man

To azure answerless;

And, as the April warbler builds her nest
Even of the down from her own ardent breast,
So from virtues, fancies, faults,
Power that for a day exalts,
Hope that seems almost to span
The abysses of God's pathless plan—
So from deeps the anxious spirit delves,
And from shadows of ourselves,
We weave a refuge for our nothingness.

IV

For what are we
That Nature should annul her law,
Whose every stately tree
Lives closer unto old sincerity?
We bear and build and buy
And then we die:

.

The day revolves and earth is cool with night,
The morrow glances but a moment back,
April is busy in his garden plot,
And ere the year is white
Our image and our message are forgot.

v

Better, O Sea, thy sullen resonance
Heaving along innumerable coasts,
Than organ-anthems of the suppliant hosts
Dim-kneeling in the litanies of chance,
Wherein the loose-tongue boasts:
I have the truth within
Bend thou beneath the rod
Or be cast out from God—

I have the truth within
And I am free from sin,
But thou cast out shalt be
Eternally.

VI

O elemental Sea, is this the speech
Thy salt lips hollo to the windy night
When long, deliberate billows break in white
On every boiling beach?
Is this the burden of thy brooding years—
That life is still so sweet,
'T were fain repeat
Its loss in gain, its tyranny, its tears—
Fain that in pious rivalry we compete
For precedence in some divine retreat,
With luckless peers?

VII

Ah, nobler, if without appeal, O Sea
Unprivileged, unsolaced by a fee

The soul emerged to thee!

For sunken to thy sea-green solitudes
Forever heaving to thy tameless moods,

A wave, a breath, to be:

O Salty Mother, thus the spirit broods
Of immortality.

STARS

S^{HIPS} of the air that haunt
The hidden bays of heaven!
Do ye then anchor by day
In the arms of an azure bay,
And when on earth it is even
Your lamps at the mast-head swing
For men to say: It is seven;
They are furling sail in heaven,
It is time we folded wing?

AD MATREM

OBIIT FEB. 23, 1895

I

F^{AR} in the open night of time
She lies who yesterday was warm as life,
Who sat, a simple presence, seemly wife,
Happy, within the guardian walls of home;
Who questioned not the azure dome
But called it heaven, nor knew of other clime
Save hers that spread no further than the chime
Of bells incoming from the distant day.
Now, mingled with the all-revolving clay,

She is a part of that wide mystery
Which sovereign stars obey
And the eternal sea.

II

Here was her seat, her couch beside the hearth
That held her daylong thro' the dozing hours,
And here the windows with the winter flowers
That drew their beauty from a span of earth—
Ah, too like her, who travelled not
Forth from the one devoted spot,
They brought a radiance of the light and air
Into the steadfast chamber there—
Nor ever asked she for a happier lot
Who stirred not ever from her homestead chair.

III

But, to her side, as to a pool for thirst,
The troubled came, the harried, and the hurt.
She knew—oh well, too well! the wounded soul
And how to soften sorrow that it burst
In tears and left the senses sweet and whole.

For in her tender eyes,
Springs of the deeper lore where pity lies—
That unlearned wisdom of the open heart—
Unto each aching tale would rise
Clear deeps of kindness like the loving sky's.

IV

She was a soul like nature's that can take
Our sorrows in its hand, and heal a grief
Yet show no atom less of blowing leaf
Nor sunny frolic in the happy grass.

She gave, nor ever asked a boon—
Gave of her spirit, gave her homely heart;
But ever kept her deeper pangs apart
Lest, hearing these, the suppliant grow mute
At burdens broader than his own
And, in her anguish, lose confession's fruit.

v

And yet not other than a woman, she:
Frail, unheroic, laughter-loving, true;
Nor held it worth a morrow's thought to do
Deeds that build deep a people's unity.
For not alone in civic ardor lies
The might of cities, but in human eyes:
In quiet moods that cool like evening dew,
In love, and low replies.

VI

Such was her daily round, till, like a lamp
That blinks abroad at twilight, here she lay
Amid the gathering of the endless gloom.

Then, craving not a longer day,—

Though loving well the neighbor tramp
Of steady toil below her darkened room,
And well the sunlight or the silver gray
Of hill and stream, and lengths of rushy damp,
And every grass-green way—

Yea, loving these, that made her wise

In nature's shy humanities,
She slept and eddied outward to the tomb.

VII

And, as a hand benign that takes, but gives
A guerdon greater, so has death bequeathed

New senses that make new the solid world.
For with her fled the follies wreathed
And all the silks of mirth were furled:
But in each alley of the green earth lives
A presence which has breathed
Airs that make strange the leaf before them twirled
And turn the thatch-birds forth as fugitives;
That hold aloof the accustomed hill
And touch, as moonlight touches, roof and rill,
And stir the ashes wherein time is sheathed.

VIII

And what was friendly at the threshold, draws
Distant in elemental loneliness;
And paths where I have idled, heeding not,
In visionary moments bless

These brooding eyes, that hover up in thought,
With stately passage of dim-moving laws.

IX

O, Day that took her, Day that like a cloud
Lurked in the under reaches of the years
With menace to her being—be to me

A mentor to make clear the steps of time;
Show in the sullen light that sweeps from thee
Across the valleys where we creep and climb
The good that greatens with adversity
The tender trust that follows after tears.

AN OPOSSUM

I SAW you from the dull repose
Of common things emerge:
The trees beside the brook arose,
The hill sloped to its verge.

My thought was of the trivial hour;
I felt the feathery snow
Athwart me, like a frozen flower,
Into the whiteness go;

And then, without a warning breath,
You ambled through the flakes—

Lyrics and Landscapes

It was as if the doors of death

Had parted for our sakes,

And up from some untrodden sphere

That lay anigh to mine

You came, and I was very near

To know a law divine.

MIDSUMMER NOON

A HUSH of summer holds the silent air,
The hills are drowsy with the simmering heat.
No happy birds wing down the open glare,
Nor wake the yellowing acres of the wheat.
Far is the neighbor upland; far the glade
That met the threshold under temperate suns,
For now a winking haze about them runs
Touching the sunlight to a radiant dance,
Where mead and hilltop into distance fade
And woods lie dubious in a sunny trance.

No wind—but now a trouble in the leaves
Spreading wood-odours like long-folded balm:
Full of the tree-root loam, and barken eaves,
And dusky berries by a bubbling dam;
Full of the scent of dews that drip and dry
Amid the dank leaves of old seasons dead;
Filled with the fragrance of some store of musk
Or balsam sweet kept yearlong casketed;
Drowsing the sense asleep—till, mid-bough high,
One robin warbles in the cedarn dusk.

The wallèd waters parleying with the rocks,
Sole throng awake while all the world is still,
Whisper of ripple 'round the heated flocks,
Or sunnier stretches toward the weathered mill;
Or patient cattle clustered in the sedge,

Seeking the cool of checkered willow shade—
Yet finding only heat, for noon has made
The very sallows sultry with his sleep;
Has warmed the pebbles at the ripple-edge
And brooded where the weedy shallows creep.

BALLAD OF THE CHIMES

NOW, in where the sunshine met the fog
Was a land of mid-year green,
For the corn sloped down by the clean white town,
And the cliffs stood up between.

And the country folk were abroad for church
Where the lanes lay white in the sun;
But out in the bay, where the fog was gray,
There was never a sound save one.

And this was the roar of the windy sea
As it leapt at the rock-built light,
The headlong sweep of the rollers' leap
Half-way of the granite height.

For the eddies set for the splintered shore,
And the sea folk knew the sign,—
Yet never a knell from the light-house bell,
Nor a note but the heaving brine.

And the landsmen crowd the seaward cliff,
With brow-fixed hands in the sun;
And the women wait at the church-yard gate,
And rumors gather and run.

And, oh, what hap to the keeper hoar
That his bell clangs never a note?
And what shall be for the kin at sea,
And what for the stranger boat?

For landward sped a stranger bark,
And never a guide had she,

And her skipper cursed the cliff that erst
Stood sullen on his lee.

“And or ever I leave the coast of France,”
Quoth the skipper, grim and gray,
“There shall be no truce but a shot let loose,
And a sunken ship to pay.

“For they keep no Christian signals set,
As they keep in the land of home.
Ere they sound a bell you may sink to hell
In the grip of a rocky doom.”

* * *

As a lie that 's hushed on a braggart's lip
Came the pleasant sweep of a bell,
Like a tender sound from the underground
When the Spring hath spread her spell.

For a little white spire in the village trees
Hath chimed a Sabbath tune;
And, Skipper, if ever ye prayed a prayer,
Now thank ye Christ for the boon!

Ye have sailed the seas this forty year,
Ye have dallied still with death,—
But a ship's-length more and the dull gray roar
Had stilled thy impious breath.

* * *

There is grace and enough for the soul redeemed,
And ease for the lucky knave,
But what of the wight who has served aright,—
Shall his guerdon be the grave?

Oh the gripless hand of the bellman heaved
In the surf of the beating bay;
And the little white belfry clanged his knell,—
But the skipper sailed away.

COVETISE

WHY should I ask a sweeter way
Than lies before me day by day;
Or envy him, who seems to tread
With lighter heart from dawn to bed?
The sullen cares that slink behind
Pursue us both—but in his mind
Is solace of a spirit free
From question of felicity.
He takes the day with happy heart;
I covet now his fame, his art;
And, yearning after what is his,
I lose my own full sum of bliss.

REBUKE

I

I BUILT my house before the hill
Where his rose who had done me ill.

'T was dear to scan him, night and day,
Bent low along his icy way,

Between the tall black trees that stood
Stark, like his own ingratitude.

'T was dear to mark how fortune mocked
The child her lulling hand had rocked;

To see him totter, old and gray,
Who was defiant yesterday.

For hate had given into my hand
Revenge. I loved his sterile land.

II

Then, ere I guessed it, in the night
A verdure dulled the deeps of white;
Grew, till the way he walked was hid
Behind a sylvan pyramid:

For April loosed a flight of leaves
Between him and my spying eaves,

And I—I bowed like a beaten god
Below Olympia's mightier nod.

III

O hands that have a touch more thin
Than any fairy fingers win!

O little leaves that blow and be
For one year's day green company!

Is there in you that coax the sun
To light voluptuous woman's fun

A heart that yearns to a broken heart
A blood that beats for friends apart?

AT SUNSET

DIVIDED in allegiance, on the height,
Between the boundaries of the day and night,
I wait for counsel, and with listening soul.
Which is the spirit's dedicated goal?
Still to move onward to the rolling west,
Nor find surcease in any bowered rest?
Or to be quiet, and to feel the tide
Of cool oblivion round my feet divide,
Sink into night and slumber, tho' the noise
Of clamoring peoples shake the spirit's poise?

Oh, sunset, beckoning to the busy deeps
That lie beyond, where day forever keeps;

Oh, grateful night with balm to seal the eyes
And lull the laborer into paradise;
Which? Shall ambition conquer or the soul?
I stand divided; which shall make me whole?

THE THREE KINGS

GASPAR, Melchior, Balthazar
(Three kings of Cologne)

Travelled outward toward a star,
Leaving each his throne.

Down they gat them to their gates
Toward the even hour,
Bearing gems and chosen cates
Herbs of fragrant flower;

Straightway up the pastures rode
Through the sleeping flocks,
Passed the shepherd's hushed abode,
Passed the well-side rocks;

Tarried not at timbrel touch,
Took no tented rest,
Journeyed, though aweary much,
Up the slumbering west.

Then, when now a morrow met
Overhead the night,
There a steady star was set,
Trembling in the light.

Under lay a lordly town
Silvered with the morn,
Straight they entered and went down
Where the child was born.

Ho! they knocked the palace gates,
Ho! they hailed the king:

Lyrics and Landscapes

"We are come with gold and cates,
Let Hosannas sing!

"We are kings accounted wise,
Journeyed over-sea;
Bring us where the baby lies:
Let us bend the knee!"

But the yawning porter spake:
"Hold, and go your way!
Inward lies the king awake
Smitten of your fray!"

Then the crafty king arose,
Spake them fair and said:
"Enter, eat, and take repose;
Whither are ye led?"

Then they pointed toward the star;

Then they told the tale:

How a music heard afar

Woke the pasture vale;

How the winged ones came and stood

Up the stony hill;

How the light ran many a rood

Thorough mead and rill.

“Lead us to the babe, oh, king,

Ope thy palace gates;

Lo, we bear him wreath and ring,

Gold, and chosen cates!”

Then the crafty king got down,

Ope’d the portal wide;

“Here doth neither king nor clown
Save myself abide.”

In they entered, keen of quest,
Made the marbles ring;
But they found nor babe, nor guest—
None beside the king.

Then bethought them of the star:
Lo, it stood away
Parted where the pastures are,
Trembling through the day.

Out they hurried, mounted, rode
Madly to the hill,
Where, above a low abode,
Stood the beacon still;

Went within, and knelt, and now
 Knew the little child;
 Gave their gold and bent the brow,
 Rested, reconciled.

But the marvel was her face,
 Mary's, with the eyes
 Blue, like upper deeps of space
 Near to Paradise.

Like a bough that bears a leaf;
 Like a space of sky
 Where a star has issued; grief
 Grown tranquillity—

So was Mary, bended down
 To her little child

Lyrics and Landscapes

Black of hair, and travel-brown,
Lowly, mother-mild.

Her they heeded; spake apart;
Hailed her queen; but she
Drew her infant to her heart—
Timid, fearfully.

Spake them fair: "O wizard kings
Hearken, 't is but one—
Mary, out of Nazareth brings
Here her naked son!"

Nay, they marvelled; bent the knee
Toward the resting star:
"Guide us, White Benignity,
Where these royal are!"

Came a trouble in the air
Like a rippled wave:
Flights of open wings were there
Sweeping low and grave;

But the star was overhead
Moveless, and they turned
Toward the lowly oaten bed
Where the radiance burned.

"King he is, of thee begot,
Queen, both fair and good!"
Lo, they blessed, but knew it not,
Mystery, motherhood!

Beauty of her face, was it
Made them worship her,

Lyrics and Landscapes

As a tender glory lit

In the evening air?

Ah, the halo that herseemed

Hovering ever through,

This they marked, but little deemed

'T was the mother's due.

For within the heart of her

Bears a youngling child,

Secrecies and mercies stir,

Fears are reconciled.

And the wick of peace within

Burns upon her face,

Till the Seer is her kin;

Kings are of her race.

So they worshipped; broke the bands,
 Bore the treasures out;
 Scattered gold of glorious lands;
 Slew the dogging doubt.

Then, when now the night anew
 Slumbered in the air,
 Down they gat them, ere the dew,
 Hailing all men fair:

"Lo, a King is born to one—
 Mary, where yon star
 Makes a cirque of light upon
 All that bended are.

"Get ye in and bow the knee
 Unto Queen and King—
 Hence we bear to a far countree
 Tidings of this thing!"

DUALITY

A STAR hung like a dewdrop
That greatens to a sphere,
And if the wind but brush by
'T will tremble in a tear.

But the star was fed with inner
Light that lit a world;
And it hung among the tree-tops
By the timid May uncurled.

And medeemed the soul of Beauty
Were the tree-tops and the star,
For apart they were a wonder,
But together Beauty are.

FOREST FIRES IN JUNE

THE dust of the trodden street
The blaze of the brick-paved way,
And the clock-work rattle and beat
Of a city's day.

Weary and gritty and grim,
And the dear green miles without,
And the sun in the zenith dim,
And the heart in doubt.

But, up from the wells of space,
Through the rivers of air, a scent,
A waft from the hills of grace
With the factory's blent,

Resinous, rich, remote,
Like a memory never known;
Like a liquor rich in the throat;
Or a wood-pipe's tone.

Odour that asks not speech
To utter the joys of toil
In the alleys of oak and beech,
In the free, sweet soil.

Oh, over the rooves of tin,
That never have known a nest,
There is smoke with the forest in
From the blazing west.

And what if the newsboy calls—
"A thousand acres ablaze!

A forest fire that appalls!"

These are Nature's ways!

It is meet that the soul of the wood

Shall once to the city gain

To heal with its pungent good

The wreck of the brain:

To loosen its essence there

For the stitcher under the roof;

For the bent back climbing the stair;

For the heart's behoof.

Oh, over the rooves of tin

That never have known a nest,

Let the forest freely in,

Like a truth confessed.

LOST

YOU saw the headstone low and old —
Slate, where the marble rose in ranks,
And not the simplest flower told
Of tears or thanks.

Beneath the willow there within
The green close by a highway set
She lay unshriven of her sin
That was love's debt.

For carved in letters deeper than
The evil in her maiden heart
This record of her trespass ran
In rudest art:

“Here lies a mother not a wife
Her name, O Stranger, ponder well.
The righteous gain eternal life,
The sinner, hell.”

But Nature, that divines the right
Had crept in moss to hide her shame,
Nor left, for unforgiving sight,
A letter of her name.

THE IMMIGRANTS

YOU knew the leaves were loose and brown
 Out where the sun sloped, leagues away;
But here the city's roar rolled down—
 The walls were warm, 't was the waning day.

He leaned and told her in her ear
 The curt, loud words of the brazen clerk—
“No place for a man and wife by the year;
 There 's breaking stone, if you want to work.”

The ship had brought them. Hope blew free
 And filled their sails—in the steerage hold.

They landed, light as a lover he,
 And she was glad, ere the hope fell cold.

Homespun gray, with a yoeman's cap,
 And tuft on chin the painter loves—
 And she in a little faded wrap
 With a veil washed green and mended gloves.

He carried—as if his wealth it were—
 A cage tucked round with bordering chintz:
 For, away from the well-loved land they bore
 The song that had swung in the window glints.

And I knew that when the chill was deep
 And human help was a sullen Nay,
 A song would spring from the cage and keep
 The troth that was made over-seas away.

Heedless the city; leagues beyond

The leaves were eddying dull and dead.

They passed—and his mild blue eyes were fond

And her heart was full—was it hope or dread?

SUDDEN SUN

WHY did he hide his face
Who lolled in the chariot seat,
With the rattling chains of wealth
And the pair with pawing feet?

For the sun that was splashed with cloud
Broke wildly through and sloped
In a torrent of yellow light
Where the riders huddled and groped.

And the stone that was grim was gold,
And the wintry willow laughed,
And the road was of paven amber,
And of wine the water quaffed.

For the bleak earth loved the sun—
And it blessed even him and his gold.
But he shuddered and shut it out.
Was his heart so bitter cold?

INCARNATION

THE granite rose on either side
In hills the toil of hands had made:

The many-windowed gaols of trade
Where eyes are dimmed, ideals fade,
And youth forgets the earth is wide.

With light to make a meadow glad
The liberal morning sloped the street;
But here the yellow sun was heat,
Or harmed the wool or hurt the wheat
Of trampling merchants, eagre-sad.

Yet one,—below the least of these,—
Of wrinkled cheek and rounded back,

Looked cheerily on the sunlit track,
The ruddy bricks, the shining stack,
And found delight in city trees;

Nor heeded how his burden weighed
Because his eyes could see the sun;
Nor knew that, out of myriads—one,
Beside him saw a shadow run
That clasped the centuries in its shade.

A tray of tools, a timbered frame
That lay along the shoulder,—these
Bent low his back and plodding knees
From nature's nicer symmetries,
And stirred the breath that went and came.

But like a loving spirit, there,
In even footfall at his side,

A shadow walked the pavement wide
With bended head, and humble pride,
And angled cross aslant the air.

It was as if the dateless sun
Forgot the years, the far abode—
And lo! upon the sordid road
The cross-worn Nazarean trode,
Holding the journey never done.

REQUIEM

THEY watched her eddying, like a leaf
The tides among,

Nor heeded where her robin hung—

For, missing her, he had not sung,

Save when she spoke once, low and brief.

But, sudden, there amid the vines

Her hands had wet,

Between the curtains, hanging yet,

She loved to draw when day was set,

He warbled like a bird divine.

Was it a dream of upland ways

With open wing?

Or was it pity made him sing
For her whose spirit hovering,
Brought peace within her holy face?

None knew—but hark! the captive brain

Set free the heart!

He trilled the sombre night apart,
And they that waited saw her start,
And then she turned—and all was vain.

No speech was uttered; yet her eyes,

Dim with the night,

Turned upward toward the squares of white
With tender, oh, with tender light,
And blessed him out of Paradise.

AN INLAND ECLOGUE

WIDE were the elm-boughs bent over the roof,
With lattices of shadow that fluttered to the
breeze;

Brown with the dyes of weather and of years
The checkered walls of freestone facing to the roads.
Like a covert shady in an olden wood,
Grateful with rest the porches ran about;
And there, by the pump, with hands upon his hips,
Leaned the merry landlord, blinking at the sun.
Years had not maimed him, age had only risen
Like a whitened eddy breaking in his smiles.

Red were his chaps and plump his fatted paunch,
And like a winded racer he panted when he moved.
“Ho, ho!” he laughed to Billy at the trough,
“Lead her in and fill her, pad her out with oats.
Little more ’n her ribs ’d make a handy rake.
He ’s nigh as lean a-drinkin’ in the bar.”
Then, with a sound like echoes in a vault,
Ebenezer laughed, and shuffled to the tap.
There stood the rider, rusty, black, and tall
As any single cedar on a lonely hill.
Laugh would he not at even that one joke,
Never failed of laughter, nay, this forty year.
Asked for his room, and ordered dinner straight,
And stalked away in silence, nor nodded even thanks.

There, in the cool sweet quietude of summer,
Summer made dim with lattices and leaves,—

There, in his room that smelt of folded linen,
Laved he his face and wet his fevered wrists;
Peered out the while between the bowed-in shutters,
Far on the fields that sloped in green away,
So to his eyes, that happiness made sadder,
Came now a smile, as when the heart recalls.
There lay the creek asleep in yonder meadow,
There once he waded, angled, when a boy;
There stood the nut-trees hoary on the hill
That pelted down the shellbarks when the wind was
 high;
There ran the lane, a rutted loop of brown,
Leading by the green ways lower to the dell;
And, where the tufts of overhanging clover
Nodded at the edge, a neighbor chimney rose.
Ah, how his heart beat, how his bosom quivered,
Touched by the hopeless memories of home!

Sweetheart and sister, mother, father, brother—
Where, where were these that held him overdear?
Where, too, the self of shining innocence,
Builder of dreams and fellow of the fields,
Self of the unlearned knowledge of the dawn
Breaking into wisdom or dying into dust?

Yea, where the self, loved closer than his kin,
Fallen like a shadow shutting out the light?
Self-love, self-will, and vanity of self
Snapped all his ties and tossed him to the sea,
Raged till he fell and lay a length of years,
Doomed, in the homesick equatorial heat.

For, when he kissed her, Lucy of the Elm,
Kissed ere the troth had privileged his lips,
She with a gentle joining of the hands
Chided, and he in passion flung away.

Sullen he strode for two defiant days
Out all the lanes that levelled to the Elm.
But when her eyes turned wistfully astray
Came from the city news that was despair:
"Never," he wrote, "should any woman make
Light of his loving, and he was for the sea."
Yet, through the years and over all the leagues,
Dark leagues of sea that laboured to the South,
Through even that bleak solitude of self,
There, like a tender spirit of his past,
Stood in the Elm shades Lucy of the Elm,
Joining her hands in daring gentleness.

Hark, at the door—a knock—and hark, again!
So, with the voice of one who stirs in sleep,
"Come in," he called, and she was standing there.
Sweet as of old, her face was like the hopes

Men far away keep kindled yet of home ;
Crossed on her bosom the kerchief of her sect,
But, like a halo, silver was her hair.

Ah, but the thrill that nearly caught his heart,
Swept out his hand as if to fondle hers,
Gleamed in his eye one moment and was gone,
Chilled and denied because she knew him not.
“Friend, will thee dine?” She bowed in gentleness,
Then led the way along the listening hall
Summer-cool with oil-cloth, curtained in with chintz,
Scented with the leaves that tapped the window-sill.

Each savoury dish was like a whiff of home,
Gathered at the threshold, tasting of the soil ;
Yet could he eat not, hungered tho’ he was,
Hungered and weary with the dusty miles ;
For, in his eyes that seeming little saw,

Levelled through the window down the lower lane,
Inward and absent as of him who dreams,
One only object centred and was real—
Gentle Lucy's hair, that like an aureole
Crowned and uplifted, severed her from him.

Snapped was the self that bound him in its bonds.
Freed and delivered, only now he knew
How she had loved him, how she stood apart
Sanctified by sadness, sainted by regret.

Noiseless she trod, a presence like the soul
Wherewith a house is hallowed to a home;
Poured out the milk, and brought him fragrant corn,
Beef from the pastures, lettuce, mellow beans,
Apples and cakes; yet looked not in his face
Save as a stranger scans a silent guest,
Pondering on his business, guessing at his name.

Then, when he threw the napkin on the cloth,
Pushed back his chair, and bowed unspoken thanks,
Oh, how his heart was breaking in his breast!
Breaking to utter, "Lucy, I was wrong—
Take what is left. I loved you, love you still;
Take what is left—" he durst not say the words.
What could he give her precious as her grief?
What but the self that wrought her silver hair?
"This way!" she said. He touched the tap-room door,
Turned, and was gone,—and Lucy knew him not.

Then, when the inn-yard, dozing in the shade,
Wakened to the tinkle of unwilling hoofs,
Lucy, with the crumb-brush balanced in her hand,
Peeped through the blinds and saw him out of sight.
"Oh," said her heart, "that some one happy day—
Some day of days forever to be blessed—

So should arrive from over sea and land
One whom I love, but he comes not, comes not.”
Then, to her work. And like a homeless bird
On, on he travelled farther from her heart.

BEACH PEAS

HERE, where the sand and the sea
Caress, and forever embrace,
You have bloomed, as a child that may be
The fruit of their race.

You were born to the drench of the salt
To the murmur of waves in the night
To the scream of the gulls through the vault
And to foam that falls white.

For, the purple you wear in your hood
And the lace of your leaves, are a sign

You are sprung of imperial blood—
Tho' of lowlier line.

I took from you seven round seed
To a land that is warm with the sun,
Where the soil is of tenderest mede
And of wind there is none.

And I waited; and watered the earth—
And I sheltered the seed from the north;
There was never a token of birth,
Nor a blade to come forth.

For you dream of the drench of the salt
And the murmur of waves in the night,
And of gulls that give joy and exult
And of foam that falls white.

And the dream was shut up in your seed

As a hope in the heart of a man,

And they longed by the salt to be freed—

And they died of the ban.

A WOOD TRYST

*T*HE moon curled open like a flower,
First to a bud of gold,
Then, in a pale and radiant hour,
With pauses manifold,
Lay in the lucid heart of heaven
Tremulous, wan, and cold.

Deep in leaves a lady lay,
White, her witch'd gown.
Where the moon looked it was day
Leafy alleys down—
Yet her head was still alway
Tho' its tress was blown.

Moon-leaves on her bodice fell,
And upon each lid;
All athwart her like a spell
Shadows dipt and hid—
And her hands lay pale and still
Twisted grass amid.

Moving in the mellow light
Of the rounded moon
Came a fairy ringlet white
Tiptoed into tune—
Came and circled left and right
With a mythic rune.

One in midst a maple bud
Waved above her eyes:
Lady, singing, cold the wood;
Rise! Rise! Rise!

Twitch thy tunic, tie thy hood—

Hark the owlet cries!

Thereto, like a weary guest,

Came her lids apart,

And a breathing of her breast

Made her bodice start—

All in crimson was she drest

Close about her heart!

Yet anon she rose and took

From a fairy's hand

Flowers of a magic look,

Like a lily-wand—

Yet, in never a forest-nook

Grown, nor any land.

And with deft and dainty care,

Thro' her bodice fold,

These she nestled 'twixt the bare
Sweets of her bosom cold,
Till the flowers, frozen there,
Withered, and were old.

Then with many a tempted start,
Many a turn of eye,
Many a fluttered hand at heart,
Many a hurried sigh—
Then, she threw her wings apart,
Yielded with a cry.

Like a spirit of the night
Sprinkled with the moon,
Underbough she took a flight
Toward the witchéd tune,
Through the leafage, fair and white,
Slipped—and lay aswoon.

Was she tranced, was she dead,
Sick of honey-brew;
Weary, laden, lanthorn-led,
Toward the brink of blue?
Hearken! hath her spirit fled
Sweeping down the dew?

Nay, the dial of leaf and sun
Counted Summer's tide,
And the careful creepers run
Tendrilled to her side—
Yet her slumber was not done
Tho' her eyes were wide.

Autumn with a mother's care,
Made a slip of leaves,
Flung a faded mantle there
From the ashen eaves,

Covered heart, and coiled hair,
Skirt, and silken sleeves.

Winter with memorial snow
Moulded her a hearse,
Made his arctic organs blow
Many a requiem verse—
Held afar the hungry crow
Cawing out a curse.

And, when air-bells in the blue
Woke the dreaming wood,
Grasses like her image grew
Woven on the sod,
As if blade and sun and dew
Wrought and understood.
But above her broken heart,
Like its living seed,

Freaked with many a dye and dart,
 Rose a wondrous weed,
Like a flower of witches art
 Culled in magic mead.

And the slanted even ray,
 And the dew of dawn
And the madrigals of May
 Blown of fluting faun:
All things that werè sweet or gay
 Sped that flower on.

Till, within its crimson core
 Lay a cloven heart
Which the binding petals wore
 With a piteous art
So to sweep the soul, or pour
 Bitter tears astart.

Hearken!—like an elfin song
 Eddying down the wood:
 “Follow, follow, late and long
 At the tryst she stood
 Follow!” dying, “ding—ding dong”—
 Slips the airy brood.

And the leafage in alarm
 Whispered of a guest—
 Babbling echo blew a harm
 Into every nest—
 Hush! a faun—a fairy charm!
 Nay, a carven crest.

One of Knighthood, yet with eye
 Like a gulf of grief,
 Weary of his panoply,
 Wan as winter leaf,

Woe-begone, for aye to be
Shorn of love-relief.

Lo! thy lady, Knight, is fair—
Shapen of the green;
Buds and berries are her hair,
Grasses are her mien,
And her broken heart is bare
In its petal screen!

Drain the scent and drink the dew
Of her crimson weed—
Is thy troth forever true?
Take her for thy meed!
Hark! what elfin laughter blew—
—Clasp her for thy need!

SUNRISE IN SONG

O SPARROW on the bending bough,
The air is gray, the sky is dull;
What filled your little heart so full
While mine was heavy now?

I could not sing without the sun,
The sun that is the harper's hand
Across the chords of sky and land,
Tuning them into one.

But, tir-a-lee! thy merry throat—
It is as if the sun were back;
For, parting wood-ways, winter-black,
Thy melody doth float

Into my chamber, thro' my heart;
Over the mists that blur mine eyes,
And, bless me! how the sun doth rise
Where, on the bough, thou art!

POET AND POTENTATE

A POET at my portal? Ho!
Summon our household, knight and knave.
Let trumpets from the towers blow,
Strew rushes, make the chamber brave.

What say you, hath he garb of green
Silken and ample, folding down
Straightway from off a lordly mien;
Are laurels woven for his crown?

Are gems set deep upon the hand
That idles with the strings divine;
Do straining leopards lead his band,
Are bearers bent with skins of wine?

Go forth and greet him! Ho, my staff,
Mine ermines. Bid my queen attend!
A Poet? We shall love and laugh
And lift the cup till lamplight end.

Spread napery, trim the banquet wicks,
Make ready fruits and cates of price,
Let flow the vats, and straightway mix
A costly vintage rich with spice.

Lo, he has journeyed; make him ease
Of scented waters, linen sweet;
Forget no maiden ministries;
With unbound fillets dry his feet.

Music! Bring viols of tender tone,
Low-breathing horns, the silvery harp.

No clamor, no bassoon to moan,
No hautboy shuddering high and sharp.

He enters, say you? Truth, but where
The Ethiops that should lift his train,
The rhythmic dancers ankle-bare,
The glow, the scent, the sapphic strain?

Alone, in simple tunic gray!
No harp, nor any leaf of green—
'T is but a whim, an antic play,
A masque to mock us of our spleen.

Bid him ascend beside us here.
Greeting, Sir Poet, joy and health.
But an you come to dwell a year
This realm were barren of its wealth.

Full many a moon we droop and die;
A very winter chills our wit;
Laughter we crave, the twinkling eye
And fond romance in passion writ.

God save us, thou hast come from far!
Ay, travelled many leagues, my Lord.
And much have seen? Ay, stream and star,
And mid-wood green and shadowed sward.

Then sit and tell us—eye and hand
And voice a triple music.—Yea,
My steps have measured many a land
Where beauty waits beside the way.

But what of dogging ballads sung,
And roses reddening every road,

And wreaths from castle casements flung,
And ribboned towns that flocked abroad?

Nay, these I knew not, save you, Sire;
I kept the byways sweet and still,
My feet were friendly with the mire,
My house is but a roofless hill.

My dance is when the tiptoe sun
Makes merry through the oaken wood,
My roses round the thatches run,
The brier berries are my food;

For music, just the nightingale—
Nay, 't is a jest. Ho, summon up
His people. Ere we hear the tale
Let 's eat and empty out the cup!

Nay, Sire, my people are but such
As fluted once on sylvan reeds:
Seers who felt the finger-touch
Of Pan and played of mythic deeds;

Or such as walk the moving air
With rumor of the might of old,
Of wisdom that was once despair,
Of love a thousand lutes foretold.

Marry, his wit is passing rare—
A merry fellow!—Nay, the quip
Hath lost its savor. Sire, I fare
Alone, what faithfuller fellowship?

For Nature loves no go-between
To listen at her cloister-latch;

Alone I trode the listening green
And slept below the forest thatch.

Alone I won the silences,
The summits of the sovereign mind,
And backward, like ascending seas
I saw the moving millions blind—

Save you, Sir Bard, 't is song we crave,
No sermon. Ere the banquet chill
Get down and dine, defy the grave,
Pour wine within, the flagon fill!

Ho, draw the silks, the tapers touch;
Poet, behold, the lackeys bow—
Nay, Sire, I tarry overmuch,
A simple crust were sweeter now.

JUNE

WHEN the bubble moon is young,
Down the sources of the breeze,
Like a yellow lantern hung
In the tops of blackened trees,
There is promise she will grow
Into beauty unforetold,
Into all unthought-of gold,
Heigh ho!

When the Spring has dipped her foot,
Like a bather, in the air,
And the ripples warm the root
Till the little flowers dare,

There is promise she will grow
Sweeter than the Springs of old,
Fairer than was ever told;

Heigh ho!

But the moon of middle night
Risen, is the rounded moon;
And the Spring of budding light
Eddies into just a June.

Ah, the promise--was it so?
Nay, the gift was fairy gold;
All the new is over-old,

Heigh ho!

ALWAYS

I

Is love, then, only liking
That lasts while beauty is;
Or while the clock is striking
Forgetful hours of bliss?

II

Is love the cheek that wrinkles,
The eye that saddens, oh—
Is love the star that twinkles
But with the dawn must go?

L. O. G.

III

Ah, happy, who have found it
In other measure made
With tender ties around it
And tranquil with the shade;

IV

With hope and home and laughter
And—whether beauty stay
Or blacken with the rafter—
A true love all the way.

VESPERS

TWILIGHT, with thy tender touch,
Loose the yoke of day;
Free my shoulders, overmuch
Worn in duty's way.

Lay thy cool and quiet hand
On my lifted face;
Drop thy shadows down the land,
Pacify my pace.

Lift the drowsy tops of trees
Into amber skies;
Slip the tightened thong of ease;
Cover curious eyes.

Love, that life but little knows
Save it spring in pain,
In thy simple silence blows
Young as Eve again.

Liquid, lovely twilight let
In my senses stay
Quiet, for an amulet
Through the driven day.

PURSUIT

TELL me, Catbird in the trees,
Has a lady been this way,
Wears a robe whose symmetries
Pull and play
With the clover at her knees—
Say! Say!

Has she set her tender feet
On the springy floors of grass,
Where the crickets murmur sweet
Even-mass?
Has she made them answer fleet
Ere she pass?


She is slender; she is light,
Like the willow ere it leave;
Like the timid steps of night
 Out of eve;
She is clad in simple white,
 Slip and sleeve.

WINTER TWILIGHT

SHY as inner hues of shells
Tinted by the sea;
Lucid, like the lily-bell's
White serenity:
So the light of Even dwells
Over me.

Ruddier at horizon rim
Where the ebon trees
Stand imprinted leaf and limb
Stolid in the breeze;
Crimson, where the waters dim
Drip and freeze.

Winter bends his icy head,
Seated by the west;
Blows the ashen fagots red
Ere he greet his guest,
Night, that by a star is led
Unto rest.



CHATELAINE

O SPRING with dangling girdle-keys
Come in and free the Daffydilly,
Undo the gyves from almond trees,
The padlock from the lily.

Loosen the birds from gaoler South,
Undo the streams that lie in prison,
And take the muzzle from the mouth
Of violets newly risen.

Exchange the hostage held of Snow,
Release the Rose from diet frugal—
Leap to the castle gate and blow
The dragon-guarded bugle.

MOON FOLK

O SCIENCE, hadst thou but a heart,
What deeper wisdom then were thine;
For not as dead the moon would shine,
But peopled by a race apart.

For when we look with loving eyes,
Rose in the South, and I at sea,
And make the moon our trysting tree
And meet embodied in that wise—

Tell me, O Science, is the moon
A blasted chaos void of man?
Or are there some that leap the span
And meet and make a lunar June?

IMPROMPTU IN MAY

THE wheels turn and the waves break,
And the work of man runs on;
But the Spring comes up the wood-alley
And links her arm with Dawn.

The mill-hand and the day-drudge,
They do their dusty toil;
But the Spring, with flying ribbon runs,
And the buds break thro' the soil.

ALL ONE

O^H, the bud that comes out of the bark
And the song that comes out of the lark
And the star that comes out of the dark,
Bring a lyric out of me, O!

For my heart, it is kin to the song;
To the star, to the bird I belong—
As the dust is the laboring throng,
And the drop is the limitless sea, O!

VERSELETS

I

How wonderful is the alchemy of the soil:
For here 's a seed and there the crumbled clod,
And each were barren to eternal toil
Saving when mingled in the hand of God.

II

THE dusk that steals the world away
Undoes a beacon star;
So, years, when you have touched me gray
Will hope shine out afar?

III

THE East is touched with gold,
From out a sunset rolled;
As if one ran with flame
And here and there set fire
To gable, arch, and spire
In some light game.

IV

THE verdure came and shadows spread to shade.
The green bound all the gray old maple's head,
But never till the night wind blew and made
The leaves sing, did I dream the winter dead.

REVELATION

WHAT if a voice from a star should wake us in
the night?

Wisdom and awe were ours, and worship and affright;
Yet from the breaking sea, forever a message falls
And we heed it not, nor know that the heart of
Nature calls.

ON AN ETRUSCAN VASE

THE heart, the hope, the peopled town
Lie buried deep in Time's decay—
And yet the artist's soul comes down
Embalmed in this new shape of clay.

JOSEPH WHARTON

MARCH 3, 1907, 81 YEARS OLD

NOT years alone nor fortune make
The gray beatitude of age;
Nor are the golden words he spake
The glory of the Sage.

Unless the heart enrich the man
And love transfigure gifts and gold,
The key is lost that keeps the plan
And time but leaves him old.

You, from your eighty years and one,
Look down on acres stacked with grain;

On acts of wisdom gently done;

On honour without stain;

And all the seasons yet to be

Can never make your spirit old,

For love has taught you liberty

And truth has made you bold.

DESTINY

READ BEFORE THE PHI BETA KAPPA SOCIETY,
DELTA CHAPTER OF PENNSYLVANIA, JUNE 15, 1899.

O UR many years are made of clay and cloud,
And quick desire is but as morning dew;
And love and life, that linger and are proud,
Dissolve and are again the arching blue.

For who shall answer what the ages ask?
Or who undo a one-day-earlier bud?
We are but atoms in the larger task
Of law that seeks not to be understood.

Shall we then gather to our meagre mien
The purple of power, and sit above the seed

While still abroad the acres of the green
Invisible feet leave imprint of their speed?

We are but part; the whole within the part
Trembles, as heaven steadied in a stream.
Not ours to question whence the leafage start
Or doubt the prescience of a people's dream.

For these are cradled in the dark of time,
And move in larger order than we know;
The isolate act interpreted a crime,
In perfect circle, shows the Mind below.

Forth from the hush of equatorial heat
The wiser mother drove her sable kin—
Was it that through our vitiated wheat
A lustier grain should swell the life, grown thin?

Was it that upward through a waste of blood
The brutal tribe should struggle to a soul,—
That white and black, in interchange of good,
Might grope through ages to a loftier whole?

Who knows, who knows? For while we mock with
doubt

The ceaseless loom thrids thro' its slow design;
The waning artifice is woven out,
And simple manhood rears a nobler line.

Then wherefore clamor to your idols thus
For bands to hold the Nation from its growth,
And wax in terror at the overplus
Won from dishonor and imperial sloth?

Wherefore implore the Power that lifts our might
To punish what His providence ordains;

To fix our star forever in its night;
To hold us fettered in our ancient chains?

The Nation in God's garden swells to fruit,
And He is glad, and blesses. Shall we then
Shrink inward to the dulness of the root,
And vanish from the onward march of men?

Give up the lands we won in loyal war;
Give up the gain and glory, rule, renown,
The orient commerce of the open door,
The conquest, and the wide imperial crown?

Yea, were these all, 't were well to let them go;
For idle gold is but an empty gain:
An empire, reared on ashes of its foe,
Falls, as have fallen the island-walls of Spain.

Treasure is dust. They need it not who build
On better things. Our gain is in the loss:
In love and tears, self victories fulfilled,
In manhood bending to the bitter cross.

In burdens that make wise the bearer, wounds
Taken in hate that sanctify the heart,
In sympathies and sorrows, and in sounds
That up from all the open waters start;

In brotherhood that binds the broken ties
And clasps the whole world closer into peace;
In East and West enwoven loverwise,
Mated for happy arts and home's increase.

What though the sere leaf circle to the ground—
Its summer task is done, the bough is clean

For Spring's ascent; the lost is later found
In some new recess of the risen green.

We are but Nature's menials. 'T is her might
Sets our strange feet on Australasian sands,
Bids us to pluck the races from their night
And build a State from out the brawling bands.

Serene, she sweeps aside the more or less,
The man or people, if her end be sure;
Her brooding eyes, that ever bend to bless,
Find guerdon for the dead that shall endure.

Truth marches on, though crafty ignorance
Heed not the footfall of the eternal tread.
The land that shrinks from Nature's armed advance
Shall lie dishonored with her wasted dead.

Yea, it behooves us that the light be free.

We are but bearers,—it is Nature's own,—

Runners who speed the way of Destiny,

Yielding the torch whose flame is forward blown.

We are in His wide grasp who holds the law,

Who heaves the tidal sea, and rounds the year;

We may return not, though the weak withdraw;

We must move onward to the last frontier.

❁ XVI SONNETS ❁

THE GILDED GATE

A THRUSH sang in the boughs above his gate
With that old passion of the Phrygian glade;
And, hushed in sacrificial awe, I stayed
With Love beside me and arrested Fate.
But why, oh Singer whom no eras sate,
Warble thy service at this altar made
For Mammon and the rituals of Trade
And to a brazen Moloch dedicate?

There is no soul within him, where thy song
Falls, and has answer, and appears anew
In lifting meditations that belong
To worship and the tender twilight true.
Man's, and not Nature's, are his moving laws,
Nor ever bends he to a Primal Cause.

BETWEEN TIDES

O PULENT August, brown and beautiful!
See how she drowns in her yellowing wheat,
Her swarthy oxen idle with the heat,
Her hand sleep-fallen from the harvest-tool.
Hark, for the tanned boys at the sultry pool
Break through her dreams, and brazen locusts beat
Their cymbals in the acres at her feet—
Up the hot sky the mill-smoke ravel's dull.

Time halts. It is the mid-hour of the year.
The heat irradiates as from reddened ore—.
To-morrow will the East undo her door,
And flocks of gray winds touch the clover sear.
Which then is life; which death? The trance; the
thrill?
The throb of action, or the slumbering will?

RENAISSANCE

A TIMID step upon the outer rim
O' the world; and hush! a sweep of blowing
hair;

And down the spaces of the frozen air
A lightness, warmth, deliverance! 'T is the whim
Of Spring to be upon us ere the snow
Suspects her, ere the sodden, sleeping soil
Has dreamed of rousing for the tiller's toil.
Deep is earth's slumber and her senses slow.

And in my heart, as if it too could stir
To grass and feel the ichor of the air—
The imprint of the timid Spring is there,
The waft of odour and the sweep of her;
And youth still beckons, tho' the boughs are bare;
On altars dead lie embers new of myrrh.

THE WIND'S DALLIANCE

How joyous must the wind feel when it blows
First through the soft resistance of the green,
When May has hung, the naked boughs between,
Her tender darlings all in dancing rows.
The winter long it buffeted and froze
And rocked in loveless anger through the treen,
Seeking for comrade leafage, and the lean
Limbs knew not how to find the wind repose.

But here, the next day after May has reached
Tiptoe, and garnished greenly each wide gap,
The wind lies like a lover on his back
Dallying—takes each leaf in his gentle lap
With soft, long kisses, like to one beseeched
By sea-girls from his onward ocean-track.

MAY

WHEN at each door of bark a tender tap
Echoes, and all within 's agog for Spring;
Then, ere the fledgèd leaves are yet awing,
While down below the cisterns of sweet sap
Stand ready tilted—from her wintry nap
May wakens, all her tresses out of ring
Her limbs acold with many a frosty sting;
And last year's blossoms withered in her lap.

Few days, and hearken—like a wizard horn
Blown in the deeps—Music! and lo, the blue
Opens its hollow heights, and shows us thro'
Into the sunny sources of the morn.

Then, in a car wrought out of clouded dew,
Young May across the eager green is borne.

VESPERS

THE midfield lies upon a lowland height
Where timid evening tiptoes at the edge,
And you may see her dark eyes through the hedge
Of cedars that imprint the westward white.
Cool green the wheat is in the quiet night,
And dusk the deeper coolness of the sedge,
Down where the field takes gentle dips to pledge
The earliest cricket for his treble light.

Then, here 's a little alley elbowed in
Between the fields, a coppice that has run
To be a road where lovers would begin
Straightway caresses. To a tranquil one
Who leans through open windows of the leaves
There 's, either way, the gold of wheaten sheaves.

EXILE

THrice have the seasons passed my country door,
And still my face averted heeds them not.

For once I knew each varied robe they wore
And heard them call me from the haunted plot.
We were as comrades are of common lot,
And lay together on the threshing floor;
We idled where the sun was harvest hot
And watched the bluet break, the bee explore.

Now, through the bars of duty, little light
Strikes in, and that once refuge of the grass
Here at my threshold wears an alien air.
Though nearer, I am further from thy sight,
Great Mother, than the multitude who pass
The echoing pavement and the lamp-lit stair.

THE RAIN-DROP PRELUDE

NIGHT closes in—the vacant autumn night,
The night once cloistered in her odorous green.

The sere brown alleys under naked treen
Dip into darkness ere a star is bright.
And in my heart the ruined aisles unite,
And in mine ears their music sobs between
Forsaken cadences of what hath been
And tender notes that trump the coming light.

Ah, Chopin, with thy fingers on the keys
The mystery is riven; from the deep
Rise up the voices of the dreaming world—
Earth-murmurs, and the surges of the seas,
And low adieus, and vain regrets that weep
Immingled with the verdure cold and curled.

COMPLINE

As evening settles down along the land,
And lamps blink and the wind is lulled asleep,
Then through the spirit moves a knowledge deep
The day denies us; then a living hand
Nestles from Nature into ours, as sand
Slides in the glass: we dream, and half we leap
The barriers that the dumb Recorders keep,
A ray streams through, and half we understand.

For twilight is the spirit's dwelling-place,
Where mystery melts the slow-dissolving world
And ghosts of order step from accident.
Faith that still hovers where the dew is pearled
Steals forth and beckons, and from banishment
Our dearer selves we summon face to face.

SINGING WOOD

UPON HEARING A GIRL PLAY THE VIOLIN

IF with a kinsman's finger you could fret
The vital chord in any clod or stone,
Would there not bubble to the air a tone
Of that one central music hidden yet?
Would there not sound, in ears that still forget,
Notes of the dumb, pre-natal antiphone,
Strains to unlock the sense from that long swoon
Which holds us till we pay the bounden debt?

So with this wood to-day you touched to song,
In it there slumbered all a season's sweet:
The moonlight and the morning and the wheat
And crocuses and catbirds—one low, long
Sweep of the bow and there a year you drew
As lies a landscape in a drop of dew.

THE SUBJECT RACE

WHEN I behold the stars in steady march
Down the long reaches of the open night
And think upon the majesty and might
That roll them through the illimitable arch—
Then, on my mortal senses like a weight
Of terror falls the littleness of man
Swept like an atom thro' the pathless plan,
A grain of dust blown by the winds of fate.

And yet, how precious in his own conceit
Is man, how vain of place, revengeful, proud,
While the slow planets to their duties bowed
Swing through the æther like a subject race,
And all we know is but a sunset cloud
Wearing the light of God upon its face.

AFTER AN IDLE NIGHT OR TWO

WHAT of the days that make no honey; store
No minted coinage in the hidden vaults
Of Fame; th' unfruitful acreage, the faults
Where run no ingots of the sinuous ore?
What of the hours spent in inner war
With work, when duty vacillates and halts?
Are there in these no message which exalts,
No harvest save the dreamer's idle lore?

Life is a learning; and a lazy day
Teaches the music which the toilers miss:
Under the lamps or when the shadows lay
Light coverlets across me, I may kiss
Hems of the happy harpers, who will play
Only for them who harry not their bliss.

IF IT COULD BE

ONCE, Shepherd, set at lip thy treble pipe,
And, noon-long, in thy shadowed oaken lair,
For ease, undo thy careless-curling hair
Across thy cheek! Once, browned and overripe
With sunny fluting in the nibbled meads,
Make me Arcadian music, make me sheep
Huddle the green, and when I rise from sleep,
Make in my fluent fingers, treble reeds!

O sunburnt Shepherd! see, thy leaves are here,
The self-same grass; and, once, this sun to-day
Dappled of old the green Sicilian way
With globes of light and shadow sphere in sphere;
Ionian winds but wait, if thou wilt play,
To bear us back to many a golden year!

SPAIN

O^F old she lashed her helm and led her host
In glorious galleons to unsounded seas;
And where her banner lengthened to the breeze
The cross stood guardian over cliff and coast.
War was the bauble of her haughty boast,
The cutlass lay across her armored knees
Forever. Yea, she built on tyrannies
The sacred ramparts of the Holy Ghost.

Sure was her doom; and that dim land she won
With lust and learning from its savage rite,—
Taught by the radiance of a colder sun,
Has crossed the sea, made tame by her old might,
And yielded back as righteous benison
The flame of freedom for her altar light.

UPON READING AN APPRECIATION OF ALDRICH

FROM the hard clamor of the brazen throat,
Man's moving legions in the metal street,—
How shall we find the tranquil old retreat
With thatchen quiet and the robin's note?
How shall we fly from millionaires that bloat
The yellow acres into pits of wheat,
Distilling commerce from the crocus sweet,
Straining a profit from the Shepherd's oat?

Ah, into thy cool close of verdurous verse,
Aldrich, I turn and find a green recess
Where the pure simples of Parnassus nurse
Mine ear offended, and my heart's distress—
Where rumble of the inevitable hearse
Stirs not a leaf of life's seclusiveness.

WALT WHITMAN

HE was in love with truth and knew her near—
Her comrade, not her suppliant on the knee:
She gave him wild melodious words to be
Made music that should haunt the atmosphere.
She drew him to her bosom, daylong dear,
And pointed to the stars and to the sea,
And taught him miracles and mystery,
And made him master of the rounded year.

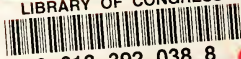
Yet one gift did she keep. He looked in vain,
Brow-shaded, through the darkness of the mist,
Marking a beauty like a wandering breath
That beckoned, yet denied his soul a tryst:
He sang a passion, yet he saw not plain,
Till kind earth held him and he spake with death.



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